

FABICK CAT

Searching for a data movement solution



CLIENT SUCCESS STORY



New tool allows AS/400 users to exploit the power of Microsoft Business Intelligence

Caterpillar dealer Fabick CAT of Fenton, Mo., is convinced of the value of Business Intelligence. The company has been working with longtime technology partner Advanced System Designs to implement its new Microsoft BI system—moving data from the company’s AS/400 to a SQL Server 2005 repository for user-friendly access.

Much of the work has fallen to Donnie Jobe, Fabick’s AS/400 systems administration and development manager. Jobe has found that the most time-consuming step in the implementation of a BI solution is building the extractions to move and load data from the business system (the AS/400) to the SQL Server BI repository.

“We had already started down the BI path, and are excited about the possibilities,” says Jobe. “And while we have found that SQL can do a lot for you, there are still things you have to do yourself. It took one person over an hour to write a package to move a specific piece of data from the AS/400 to the SQL Server.”

Jobe says the BI implementation process has been “evolutionary,” with Fabick and other Cat dealerships discussing ways to make the process even easier. “We’d been talking about development of a data model—one that could be replicated so we can repeat it. I told ASD, ‘I don’t want to have to do this manually. We’ve got to do something to make this easier.’ And they delivered.”



“What used to take me an hour now takes five minutes. ASD came up with a tool that is easy, solid and quick. It’s a way to automate BI to take the manual work away—so we can focus on getting the data to the repository.” —Donnie Jobe, AS/400 systems administration and development manager, Fabick CAT

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Finding a data access solution

When ASD’s iSeries customers asked for an easier way to give them access to their AS/400 data—one with state-of-the-art BI tools that allowed users to access the data with tools they know and love in Microsoft Office—ASD responded with a solution that:

- Allows them to quickly access data with minimal impact on the AS/400 server
- Automatically pulls the data so they can build BI solutions much faster and easier
- Enables accurate data to be delivered to end users
- Automatically builds the infrastructure to move data and simplifies management of the systems
- Gives them total data logistics control through a single AS/400 command and minimizes the level of Microsoft skills required to deploy the solution

ASD’s Data Logistics – AS/400 Edition allows businesses to unlock the power of their IBM AS/400 data using the Microsoft SQL Server 2005 BI system. BI Express delivers an enterprise architecture framework unlike anything in the marketplace.

Data Logistics – AS/400 Edition

The Data Logistics – AS/400 Edition is a component of ASD BI Express (© 2008 Advanced System Designs, Inc.) It uses a simple AS/400 command interface and allows seamless data movement between DB2/400 and SQL Server 2005.

Data Logistics – AS/400 Edition:

- Provides a single point of control for data logistics through AS/400
- Accelerates deployment of the Microsoft Business Intelligence solution
- Simplifies integration from DBS/400 to SQL Server 2005
- Automates SSIS development for data movement
- Is a component of an enterprise BI architecture framework
- Allows developers to focus on the data model and report development
- Allows AS/400 developers to deploy with limited SSIS skills
- Provides a source repository for AS/400 data native on SQL Server 2005
- Eliminates the need for expensive data movement tools that just move data

Making things easier

Jobe says he provides more value to the Fabick organization when he is spending his time putting the data in the repository, not writing applications to move data from one system to another. “That’s where I need to focus,” he says.

ASD’s tool makes that possible. “Prior to this tool, everything was manual using SQL Server Integration Services (SSIS). If you wanted to use the data from File A, you wrote a package to move that data from the AS/400 to the SQL Server. With this tool, all I have to do is hit a command on the AS/400. There are one or two things that you run, and the tool takes care of everything else for you.”

Jobe is excited about the possibilities. “We’re still learning how to use it,” he says. “ASD has set the foundation—and now I can start rolling.”

One of the things Jobe likes most about ASD’s BI solutions—and the data management tool in particular—is that he can trust the quality of the data.

“I don’t want the end-user at Fabick making decisions based on bad data,” Jobe says. “These processes allow us to ensure that data is correct before we allow the user to have access to it. We push the data, and every day I feel confident with the data on the other end.”

Identifying applications

Jobe has found ASD’s data movement tool perfectly suited for Caterpillar dealerships—no matter their level of BI. While Fabick is implementing a new BI solution, he has spoken with another dealership that has been using BI for a number of years using SQL Server 2000 and is now converting to SQL Server 2005.

“The ASD tool is a great solution for this dealership,” Jobe says. “Rather than do individual packages for each conversion, this solution makes a list of files, tells them the steps to take to transfer, and it’s done for them. They’ll be moving 120 to 130 files—and this will save two weeks to a month in the process.”

“There are many different applications this component can support,” says Brent Hoover, Director of Consulting Services for ASD. “The tool allows my consulting teams to focus on the data model to support the BI reporting requirement—so they’re not spending time moving or translating data from the AS/400. To me, the major benefit of this tool is its versatility in supporting the movement of information with no development effort. The result is a table that can be queried, or that can become the source for an enterprise BI solution for your company.”

Technology People.
 Business Results.

ASD people are technology people. Experts who understand the breadth of technology solutions available. Consultants who apply that expertise to your specific needs. And partners who care about delivering business results for your organization. For more information or to arrange a meeting, give us a call or visit us at www.asd.net.

We create Business Intelligence solutions that enhance your success today and in the future. First we study your business, then we design the solution, implement the architecture, and select the software and hardware required to get the job done.

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Introducing BI Express

ASD’s BI Express architecture framework consists of a suite of tools that allows developers to build and deploy BI solutions using SQL Server database. The Data Logistics – AS/400 Edition is just one component of the entire solution illustrated here.

